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**A FANTASY OF SOULS**





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**"You may well cry and beg, 'Forgive, forgive'" (page 27)**

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7/13 1864

# A FANTASY OF SOULS

BY

MARGARET IRVING

pseud

AUTHOR OF

"NATURE'S TRUTHS TOLD TO A LITTLE MAID"

Mary Washington (Soul) New York



NEW YORK

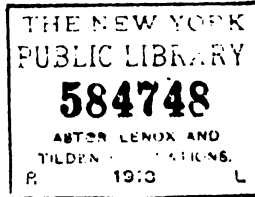
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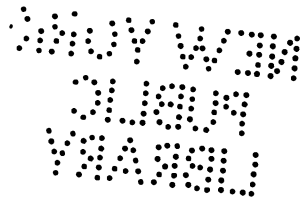
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**IN SECRET PLACES**





## **IN SECRET PLACES**



## IN SECRET PLACES

**S**OFT, velvet blackness of the deepest hour clings close about us; dense, impenetrable gloom enwraps our very souls in its heavy sable folds. It is the lightless period preceding dawn; silence reigns supreme. Spirits, happy, sorrowful, wicked, sick—secure in the enveloping protection of this witching hour—rest confidently, free from their several joys and ills. In the dark obscurity of midnight soul stands before soul, dependent upon the moments' shadowless protection to defend each from the others' searching gaze.

It is the hour of discovery, that magic time when men and women are truly themselves to all who seek them in spirit, apart from its visible material shell; now while all nature sleeps the inner man, the real "I Am," stripped of taudry trappings, stands forth revealed in beauty or in ugly, awful shape. Material garments avail him

## A FANTASY OF SOULS

little. Cast from him, the real him, are robes worn during intercourse with men. Let us draw aside all protecting draperies and, seeking deeply each outward familiar semblance of some companion of our daily association, investigate these mysteries. Come with me, we will travel into secret places, you and I, and, before dawn, penetrate through many shams and tread reverently upon holy ground.

Strange and eerie journey, is it not, this trip in search of the real, the true?

Do not travel so fast, my friend, remain a short time here. See, we have already, in truth, begun our journey, and stand at the bedside of our first unconscious host, unbidden and unchallenged guests.

All seems shadowy and unreal, except the recumbent figure near our side. Do we know this man? Surely no! His countenance seems quite strange. But is it really so? For, while we continue to look upon him, a faint resemblance can be traced in that poor face—a resemblance to one which, during waking hours, is wreathed in

## IN SECRET PLACES

sunless smiles and continual expressions of goodwill. The mask of this has now been laid aside. Here he lies before us, bereft of artificiality, revealed his poor, drooping, cynical mouth, with loose, flabby underlip, heavy, brutal, beast-like jaw and chin. We can see, in these relaxed features, the true expression of the soul within. In the wrinkled, twisted brow discontent and temper speak; those awkward, stiff and unresisting limbs as plainly show his stubborn and unlovely disposition, no less than the miserable tale told by his clenched fingers—those terribly grasping and rapacious fingers—holding unto himself all in his power of everything his twice little soul holds dear. Those bony, heavy feet will stamp out all conditions that stand in the way of his material pleasures and gain of worldly goods. Yes, in very truth those tight-locked fingers will grasp and keep unto themselves all, all that comes within reach of their sordid and selfish touch; while, rejoicing and unashamed of his misdeeds, this human vulture will leave bankruptcy, poverty and bleeding hearts behind.

## A FANTASY OF SOULS

That iron wrist will wring from you or me, aye, even from his nearest kin, whatever he desires to possess; and that loose mouth will lie or kiss, wherever it will help to bring him gain—gain in love, or play, or gold. Look at those restless eyes; how they stare at us through their fast-closed lids with hard and icy gaze; they cut into the soul, cut into your soul and mine deeper than the sharpest blade of polished steel.



He is at rest, if indeed such a miserable soul can ever be at rest. *Himself* at last secure in the impression that, while he sleeps, his spirit bears, as when awake, every petty mean deceit with which it is clothed during waking hours, cleverly concealing all the scars and malformation of his natural self. Our sordid and selfish companion, little does he dream that at last his life is open, open to study as from an unclosed book, and as fully comprehended. Poor thing, poor, unhappy, unlovely thing! He is ours to pity and abhor. But come away, we have lingered too long among his secrets. To-morrow,

## IN SECRET PLACES

should we meet him among his fellow men, we shall recognize him, not by his clever masquerade attire, but in all his baseness and nakedness of soul, deformed, misshapen, horrid to our inner vision. Let us leave him with our God and his God. The time will come when he shall see himself with sight as clear and true as we now see him in all his revolting imperfections. Pity, pity, oh pity that poor, deformed spirit. Of all his enemies he is his own worst enemy; and the torments of the damned he will suffer when at last he realizes the wreck he has made of himself, not only of himself, but of the beauties he has destroyed in his own life and in that of others. We will hope and pray and mercifully draw the curtain, draw it, for his own sake as well as for our own, say "God forgive him" and pass on.

Our way is long to-night and we must not linger. Invisible fingers are leading us forward. Now we must stop again, for here is another familiar form. Look at him wrapt in sleep; closely, closely study every line of that unconscious face, and limbs relaxed in the depths of slumber. What meets your eager eyes, oh



## A FANTASY OF SOULS

friend? Does not that calm brow, lightly traced with delicate lines so fine, denote pure thoughts and noble aims? A warm and tender heart beats in that breast, not only a warm and tender heart, but a noble and generous soul controls that life. The gentle smile upon his firm and kindly curving lips whispers of unselfishness, courage, honesty and charity. This soul has fought the great fight with worldly temptation. Every line upon that rugged face, of itself irregular and plain, is made beautiful by the light within; and each tiny mark tells of a battle fought—of a battle fought and won for right.

Happy spirit! He smiles in his sleep; and we will leave him to his well-deserved rest, with a warmth about our hearts, a glad light in our eyes and a blessing on our lips as we murmur, "God be thanked for such men and women as he."

The night is misty; there are no stars, there is no sound. Pause a minute now, for we are about to visit one of our friends whom we least understand. How quiet it is! The room seems filled with violet shadows; everything looks unreal, ex-

## IN SECRET PLACES

cept the reposing figure before us. It is a woman, a beautiful woman, young and fair; long shining hair covers her as with a veil. She lies here, strange, majestic, wrapped in slumber sweet and deep. She does not know we are gazing at her through all outward seeming, and can see, within her material body, her pure and radiant spirit, hidden so completely from mortal eyes. What has happened here? Her soul seems enveloped in purest ecstasy. That proud and haughty personality, so well known to us, appears transformed and in its place supreme love, gentleness, sacrifice and rejoicing are what we find written on her peaceful brow. She seems glorified; her figure floats in a strange, radiating, white light. Life—wonderful, mysterious Life. Come closer; look at her arms, delicate and slender as white lilies, cradled carefully upon her breast. Safe within them folded lies a new spirit, born to earth and all its conditions, a new soul, fresh from the great unknown. She is no longer the grand dame, the leader of society, the worldly woman



## A FANTASY OF SOULS

among worldly women. No, this condition she has cast from her spirit with her waking garments, and she now lies before us as she *really* is—a mother. Motherhood is hers; and motherhood, to provide bodies for future generations, is the greatest honor that can come to any human creature. What tremendous responsibilities the divine name “Mother” implies. What a trust has been given to her! We cannot look upon that serene and gentle face, the strong, tender mouth, the noble brow and careful protecting arms, and doubt her love, purity, unselfishness and capability of expressing to her child every attribute of pure motherhood. The child on her breast is so new, so spotless, so innocent, that we can say nothing before this young spirit, shining brighter than the brightest sun lying peacefully before us, untouched as yet by one earthly condition, both innocent and ignorant of all worldly things. Shall we dare to return in a quarter of a century and expect to find no disappointment awaiting us in this boy? I fear we would not derive the same joy and satisfaction that is ours to-night as we gaze upon his beauty and purity.

## IN SECRET PLACES

To-morrow we shall meet "the mother in the world of men," a bit disdainful, bejeweled, overdressed, powdered and curled; but she will never again be the society butterfly to us. The great lady we shall not see; instead will be this devoted mother—a Madonna, with her child upon her breast, her face, sweet, human, beautiful with the joy of motherhood. She will wonder at the kindness of our glances and the warmth of our greetings, and sensing we have in some mysterious way grown near to her, flash into our eyes one happy, radiant look from behind the veil, in which her spirit so securely hides away from common mortals.

The witching hour is passing and we must hasten on our way, as the time of investigation is going fast.

We have arrived at our next halting place, and it is a sad and gloomy room to which we have come. Another woman is before us. I will whisper her name; you turn away your head; you will not look. Why all this emotion, comrade? Why are you so pale. Come, you *must* come; it is ordained that you examine her well. She cannot

## A FANTASY OF SOULS

hurt you, poor soul; she is asleep: a fitful, broken rest is hers. It is not the first time I have made her such a visit. One year ago to-night I stood unknown beside her bed and looked upon her gentle face—aye, with love and adoration—for she was my saint. I dreamed sweet, wild dreams that night; but they are past, and now a night-



mare keeps me company. How dear she seemed twelve months ago, a dainty girl of seventeen short years, sweet and pure, beautiful of soul and body. Her lips wore the smile of innocence, her loveliness shone as that of an angel. Dreams chased each other through her pretty head, happy dreams of love and hope and joy. One childish hand clasped fast a little ring; the other lay relaxed, palm up and open wide, ready to receive all of the tenderness and happiness that enveloped her spirit as in a golden cloud. Poor child, poor child! You are weeping, my friend; the bitter tears are falling fast. Yes, I know your love was all the world to her in that past springtime. Your love, your promises, they made her life; and, in return, she gave

## IN SECRET PLACES

you all she had to give, in sweet ignorance of herself and man. Not to me, man, explain; not to me, but to the broken woman lying before you. Your voice will penetrate through her sleep and she will see you as in a vision. Speak, make your peace; to-morrow it will be too late, too late! I know this place is dark, but you need not tremble so; she is quite accustomed to darkness now, to iron bars before her window and her prison bed and fare. Why is she here? You more than all others should know full well.

Think back to the forgotten springtime days, those days of childish innocence and maiden faith betrayed. *Think back, think back!* Delve deep within your own bare soul; lay it open wide and read within as you have penetrated this night into the secret, sacred places of other men. What do you find? Let us seek together. See all the fair promises you destroyed with ruthless hand; see all the little pitiful letters left unopened, and your flight to other lands. What a foul and selfish coward looks that naked soul of yours. And now turn your eyes from the past months of your infamy to this woman here before you. She

## A FANTASY OF SOULS

moves, and whispers in her sleep words too odd and strange for her soft lips to speak. Look at all those *bruises*, black and deep upon her spirit. Its glory is sorely mutilated by ugly scars inflicted by yourself. It was such a bright, beautiful spirit, *how could you*, oh, how could you so stain it with shame and crime? See her eyes; look deep within them and read the saddest of all sad things. Those eyes, once so wonderful, clear and bright that they emitted sparks of pure angelic light, but now, through their transparent lids, they look like caverns—black, unwholesome, gruesome—giving forth neither rays of light nor life. Her fresh young lips which whispered dreams so fair and holy, and on which you have pressed many a lover's kiss, are parched and blue and dry. Come closer, still closer, and read what is pictured on her troubled heart. Look! First you see her all happiness, faith and love. Now she has changed a little, because you were somewhat cold and unkind to her that day. Again, now you did not keep your promised tryst and she is sad. She writes a letter, such a sweet, dear letter, and waits and waits *and waits*. She does

## IN SECRET PLACES

not sleep; her heart beats at a madlike pace and then again almost ceases to work at all, so still it keeps. It is listening, listening for a love-message, but all in vain! No letter, no lover! Upon her white knees she kneels and prays and prays, but prayers bring no relief. Months have flown. We see her frightened, sad and most disconsolate. Wild with terror, she understands at last that she *must* find the father of her child or woe for all. She has no confidant; she dare not speak. Bewildered and afraid, she leaves her home, her people, to bear alone in poverty and shame her sore trouble, which should have been her great delight and pride. In solitude and misery, among coarse and heartless strangers, she passes through the anguish and perils of childbirth, heartbroken and forlorn. She is mad with grief and pain. The world, God's beautiful world, is torment to her, and God's people laugh at her in scorn. She is weak and soulsick. She gazes with horror at the little creature in her arms and he, the child, stares and stares back at her, seeming to mock her with his father's eyes, in which she reads derision and contempt. A ter-



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rible coldness descends upon her; a blazing redness burns behind her poor, deep-sunken eyes; thick, red, sluggish blood surges and beats in her distorted brain; her fingers stiffen, her neck and delicate muscles become as iron. A frightful glitter springs into her dull eyes; the slender white fingers open and close and stretch themselves until they look like supple snakes and they softly touch the tiny feet; further up, over the small body, they creep, upward, ever upward, until they cling about that impudent baby neck. The mocking eyes continue to gaze and wink at her; the twisted, shriveled mouth, so unchildlike in its expression, leans and grins in mocked glee. Her slender, white fingers continue to cling, closer, closer, ever closer; tighter is their grasp; tighter, ever tighter about the baby neck. The eyes still stare; the face, once white, becomes blue, and then black and twisted into frightful shapes. And now the spasm has passed. The mother's false strength has left her; she becomes once more herself, and finds, within her grasp, a baby, stiff, cold—quite dead! But those eyes, those terribly familiar, manlike, provocative eyes will

## IN SECRET PLACES

never trouble her again. With one wild cry, as of a spirit of darkness, she cowers in horror away from the dreadful thing so near her. In a stupid, dazed condition she reaches forward, and with one thin hand touches the monkey-like figure so cold and still upon the bed. Then like a hunted beast she falls upon the floor, and, with moans and sobs, awakens all the neighbors within hearing of her cries. The door of her poor attic is pushed open and a mob of strangers surround her. The women scream, the men curse and grasp her dainty body with rough hands. Nature can stand no more; the poor soul mercifully faints and is dragged away unconscious to solitary confinement behind strong prison walls. The country is now satisfied. She has murdered—oh yes, without a doubt she murdered—her beautiful baby; and for this dreadful crime she is in the strong grasp of the law. To-morrow this same law will make an example of her. In the prison yard the gallows is already standing gaunt and grim. At sunrise they will lead her out, or rather carry her to her punishment, for she is too weak and ill to stand upon her little feet.

## A FANTASY OF SOULS

The men will leer at her; the chaplain will mumble a prayer over her, which she will not hear. The rope will be neatly adjusted under each pearly ear, and your sweetheart of one year ago, your beautiful, innocent plaything, will receive full payment for her trust in a man's promises by hanging; hanging high, so high that the gaping crowd must look skyward to enjoy the horrible show. There they will watch and gossip on "the wages of sin," while the white and tender body of this poor, shame-stained creature swings and capers in the sunshine above their heads, cutting gruesome antics while held aloft by that same lovely, delicate neck, so round and soft, which once afforded you so much delight to fondle and caress with loving kisses. Imagine the scene! Your one-time lady-love hanging and swinging backward, forward, slower, slower, until her fair body drops limp and soulless at the hangman's feet—dead—yes, quite dead! O, miserable man! Well may you cower on your trembling knees and bow your wicked head in penitence before this sleeping woman. You cannot bend too low to beg of your victim, to beg of

## IN SECRET PLACES

your God, pardon for the terrible crime you have brought upon her and on yourself. Can you doubt that, were all the truth disclosed and true justice done, it would be on yourself the iron hand of the law should fall, and not on the poor wretch who was made to suffer.

You may well cry and beg "Forgive, forgive; for God's sake forgive! I did not mean to be so cruel. I was weak, I was thoughtless, but oh, not wicked! How could I know what the result would be? Forgive! Speak, oh, speak but once, and tell me I was not intentionally wicked! My heart, my heart, poor girl, how could I dream of this!"

Look! Her pale lips move, and she faintly whispers, "Too late, too late! unfortunate man; the wages of sin is death." Aye, verily, this is true, not only to the physical body, but also to something unspeakably holy that dwells deep within each soul. Ah me! Ah me! And you, the betrayer of my innocence, the father of my child, the wrecker of my life—you must suffer just retribution for "the wages of sin is death."

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The witching time is over. The cathedral clock strikes one, proclaiming the first hour of a new day. Clear and sweet a life-giving gentle breeze floats into the prison cell. Through the high-barred window a cold, white moonbeam steals and rests upon the calm pale face of a sleeping woman, worn and purified by suffering. In sleep, merciful dreamless sleep, she awaits the dawning of her last day.

In the shadow of her hard and narrow bed, like a dark messenger of evil, crouches an uncanny figure, strangely gray and still. The figure bears a man's shape; and low upon his knees he kneels, with hands tight clasped in supplication.

Yet, judge him not with too stern a heart; for, having passed through the torments of self-reproach, he is now beyond all human help and sympathy and has already received full reward for his terrible offense against God and man. Utterly crushed, he realizes that "the wages of sin is death." May his poor, depraved, mistaken soul at last find peace!

## THE FAMILY CLOAK

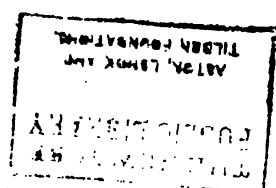






**"Come into your true inheritance" (page 50)**





## THE FAMILY CLOAK

**E**VERY nerve is throbbing, beating, beyond my poor control; my head and limbs are weary and aching for the rest that is denied me. Oh, dear, pitiful God! How I long and pray that peaceful sleep may come to me at last.

It is again night, the night I so longed for and yet dreaded to feel about me. The moonless sky is overcast; blunt shadows of trees and shrubbery show blacker against an already intensely gloomy background. There is no sound of human life without the house or within its doors. I lift my curtain and with watchful eyes peer out into the velvet darkness. Strange noises of the night reach my ears; the uncanny hoot of the owl, and weird fluttering of sable wings, as the creatures of the dark dart here and there. My eyes wander among the shadows. I see queer, fantastic



## A FANTASY OF SOULS

shapes creeping, creeping from one tree to another, and as they pass my window they pause, straighten their crooked, distorted bodies to wave long, ungainly arms at me in flippant familiarity. With a shudder I turn my head away and with trembling fingers hasten to screen them from my sight. Blinds are fastened, windows closed and curtains drawn together secure and fast. Not until then does my body cease to tremble. I sigh with relief as I move about my sleeping room preparing for a night of rest—if, indeed, there is such a thing as rest for me!

One shaded reading lamp is doing duty on a table beside my bed, sending out faint and not far-reaching light, which leaves the distant corners of my room filled with dusky, violet shadows, vague and eerie. Furniture, familiar to me by daylight, takes on a new aspect in this dim, uncertain light. A great lounging-chair stands by my bedside, ready to give me comfort within its roomy depths. But look, look! What is that I see peeping from around the corner of the soft-cushioned chair back? Can it be, I ask myself, one of those horrid little goblins, brother

## THE FAMILY CLOAK

to the gruesome nightmares that greeted me from the darkness without? See, see! The angles of my room are full of them, gobbling, grinning, pointing, chuckling, one to the other. Their little malicious ferret eyes, cold as steel, horrible shining with a devilish light, are fastening upon me in wicked glee. They seem to take particular pleasure in my distress. "O Lord!" I cry, "what are these things, these intangible, fearsome things that keep their eyes upon me day and night?" In the darkness their loathsome figures rise up and dance before me. In the daylight their high, discordant voices are constantly buzzing in my ears. If my heart throbs with pleasure over a tale of some noble deed, immediately I hear a cold, hard, rasping voice shouting, "Don't believe it; don't believe it; don't believe it!" If warm, caressing arms are passed about my neck, and endearing words are whispered into my ear, straightway one of those terrible goblins murmurs into the other ear, "Don't believe it; don't believe it! It is all false, all false." What might be my pleasure, my delights, are turned into horrors, into travesties;

## A FANTASY OF SOULS

what might give to others and myself so much happiness is transformed into misery for all.

I am incapable of fully understanding the good and the true, for those imps of Satan distort to my mind all that comes near me, and allow me to see to advantage only the mean and unworthy. Even the radiance of God's wonderful sun, the grandeur of the mountains, the glory of the sea, the heavenly blue of the sky, the golden stars, the whole veritable great marvelous world—all, all are seen by me "through a glass darkly." A mirror of darkness and gloom is held before my mind and eyes by those devils' servants. "What are they? Whence do they come?" I cry in despair, and a terrible intuition within me clamors to be heard above the demons' din, crying: "Listen to me, please; yes, listen to me. They come from *within*. Look, seek; find the *cause*. *They are your thoughts*, black thoughts, born in an atmosphere of hate, dark, murderous hate; uncharitableness, narrow-mindedness, prejudice, *selfishness*, cowardice, pride, love of selfish power. These thought-companions will bear you company until, from out your heart

## THE FAMILY CLOAK

and life, you have vomited them forth. There is beauty, so much beauty, in your soul if you will only look for it; but if these black monstrosities remain they will drive it all away. Turn them out, turn them out!" "How ridiculous," I exclaim, and feel my face grow red and hot with anger. "Look at me, just look at me! A broken, bruised, wrecked life is mine; sad and sorrowful, I admit, but not through any fault of mine. I have done nothing—no, nothing—do you hear what I say? Nothing! My thoughts are good and pure and broad. I *am* unselfish, charitable. Love and kindness I hold for all. These devils are none of mine; they are sent to do me unto death by those who have made my life a failure." Faintly, faintly, down deep into my heart, what is this I hear? "Shame, oh, shame! poor deceived creature, shame, shame! You lie to yourself—lie, lie, lie!" and now a troubled sigh, a stifled sob, and all is still, strangely, deathly still. I look about my room with fearsome eyes. The horrid little ghouls have gone, and at last I am quite alone. A long-drawn sigh of relief escapes me, and I hasten to

## A FANTASY OF SOULS

prepare for sleep, hoping, praying to lose myself in the land of dreams before my unwelcome visitors return.

The clock ticks the minutes and hours away, and still sleep, thrice blessed sleep, is denied me. Tired eyes wander here and there and at last fasten themselves for rest upon the pictured face of a beautiful child, a little child who should be more to me than life. How sweetly and serenely she gazes at me, with her pure open eyes, in the depths of which shines a smile, a smile still bearing holy light from the angel world. Her rosy, softly curved lips seem to murmur, "And but as ye become a little child, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven."

I feel that I am growing sleepy, but the childish eyes are still upon me, gazing straight into my own, holding me as with a hypnotic spell. I hear a clear, childish, flute-like voice chant, "And a little child shall lead them" and, "But as ye become as a little child ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven, heaven, heaven." Softer, slower, softer, slower, the notes fall on my ears

## THE FAMILY CLOAK

until I hear no more. I am asleep. Oh, blessed sleep, may it be dreamless.

Ah, how my limbs ache, how heavy I feel! I am so weary, so weary! a great burden seems to be pressing down upon my heart. I can no longer see the child-face. I can no longer hear the sweet-voiced singer. I am again awake, exceedingly wide awake; but I can see nothing, for I am enveloped in the heaviest and blackest of woe. What has happened? Is it a miracle? I am standing in the midst of a barren, sandy plain; a desert stretches out in front of me and behind me, and a damp, uncomfortable mist surrounds me. I must move forward. But no, I am afraid. I turn and flee backward. On and on I go until I am suddenly and mysteriously stopped. Then, wonder of wonders! many years have passed from me. I am no longer old and feeble, but young, a girl once more; the rich, young blood is pounding through my veins. I stand at the beginning of life, strong, healthy, bright and hopeful, my heart filled with ambitions for the best of everything worth striving for that life contains, holding firmly to ideals



## A FANTASY OF SOULS

good and true, longing for life, for joy, for love, for freedom to do and dare—to live, in short, up to the highest within me. But gladness leaves my heart, and a sadness and utter hopelessness descend upon it!

I look out over the sandy waste and see coming rapidly forward a man and a woman. They move with a determined tread, they are old and gray, and stiff of carriage. They are very near me now and wear the faces of my parents, long since dead. What do they want of me? What do they want? I tremble, poor frightened, tender creature that I am, and wait in fear. The man



carries in his hard, firm hands manacles of strange workmanship; also a great heavy ball and a goodly length of clanking chain. The woman's arms are holding fast a thick, ungainly cloak, soiled, worn, unlovely and of musty odor; also a veil, long, coarse, black, dank. The woman—my mother—weeps as if in pity, and wrings her little fragile hands, while her companion, stern and grim, grasping my white wrists

## THE FAMILY CLOAK

with bony fingers, snaps tight about the tender flesh his cruel manacles. My hands, now prisoners, around one of my slender ankles he attaches the heavy chain and ball. This accomplished, my mother, coming slowly forward, enfolds my shrinking body in her cumbersome, gruesome cloak, which conceals beneath its musty folds my own bright, beautiful garments in which I have taken much pleasure. The veil is next flung over my freely flowing hair, and closely drawn before my fresh and smiling face, completely hiding my eyes from view, and by the darkness and thickness of its almost opaque consistency, concealing almost everything from my sight. I can now see but a short distance before me; and what I do see is so different, so very different, from that on which I gazed when free from these strange, uncomfortable garments that are not *mine*. "They do not belong to me!" I exclaim. "Oh! Please, please, do not make me wear these things! They do not fit; they hinder my movements; they smother me; they bind my hands; they retard my progress; they blind my eyes; they make me faint and sick. They are not mine,

## A FANTASY OF SOULS

they are not mine!" It is useless for me to cry. I recognize at last that on my young and tender shoulders has been cast the "Family Cloak" of generations past, and the veil that prevented my parents and grandparents from seeing clearly any great distance beyond their own inclinations and limitations will, from the present time until my life is finished, blind my eyes and mind to very many things outside of myself and my present environment. With the bestowal of the cloak and veil I also must take upon myself the ancestral traits, both good and bad, of a long line of parents, great and greater still, until several generations are represented in myself. Oh, woe is me; woe is me; to be myself and not myself, chained, bound, hampered, blinded! "Is there no pity, no pity," I moan. I cast myself upon the hot, burning sands, weep and cry in helplessness and despair, Oh, woe is me! Woe is me!



Now I sleep.

## THE FAMILY CLOAK

And now I awake again and see strange things. Hundreds, thousands, millions of young, beautiful, brilliant, Godlike beings are filling all this misty space about me. Among these bright spirits descend shrouded creatures, old and shriveled, smelling of the charnel house. Their stiff, clamlike hands are busy enfolding this company in garments similar to mine—veils, manacles, chains, balls; yea, all that I wear they too must wear. Some few among this radiant band beat back the gruesome hands, and, standing strong and firm among the conquered ones, battle right royally for their liberty. Again the persevering aged hands try to grasp these brave and fearless beings. Again and again they are driven back by strength of will, by inherent faith in themselves to win the fight. Weaker the old hands grow, stronger the young arms strike; and now the victory is theirs. With looks of sympathy and regret for their weaker brothers and sisters they dart away over the desert sands, free, brilliant, self-reliant, leaving a trail behind them blazed with the golden light that has fallen from their wonderful garments. No "Family Cloak"

## A FANTASY OF SOULS

will they carry on their shoulders; no bands of customs, old and useless, will they allow to impede their flying feet; no ancestral veil will hide the beauties and opportunities of the future from their eager, searching eyes. Strange, strange!

Left alone with my heavy burden of heredity, again I sleep, again I awake. A miracle must have taken place while last I slept, for my terror, sorrow, despair—all have left me. I do not miss my youthful garments, so soft and white. I look with perfect satisfaction upon the worn and ugly things I wear. My body has grown to fit the "Family Cloak" perfectly. I do not miss the glorious visions that used to pass before my girlish eyes, I feel secure and quite protected beneath the heavy, misty veil that has changed so completely every sight to me. I am content, aye more than content, that this is so. Complete freedom may possibly do very well for a few courageous souls, but it entails too much responsibility to be enjoyed by the majority of mankind. A comfortable seclusion, hidden safely beneath an ancestor's great garment, irresponsible to a certain degree for events, sheltered by

## THE FAMILY CLOAK

past generations from participating in any venturesome deeds belonging to the present age, is far better. I am quite satisfied to be what I am, and start again on my journey to the country beyond the desert with halting, jerky steps, dragging cheerfully behind me my galling chain and ball.

The mists are lifting now, and before my veiled eyes stretches a desolate waste of sand. Around me float strange shapes which seem to know all about me and seek my company. Who is that creature, the one in the distance, coming after me? Watch him; see him slinking, tottering, hiding, creeping from stone to stone! Bending low, he rests his ear close to the hot sand and listens, listens, listens, while his shifty little staring eyes peer first to the right, then to the left, behind, before. Now, leaping suddenly high into the air, he make a downward, diving spring upon my already sorely weighted shoulders, and disappears under my heavy wraps of servitude, servitude to the past. I feel within my garments; but he has suddenly mysteriously vanished. Where, I do not know. But wait!

## A FANTASY OF SOULS

What is this strange beating and trembling in my heart and of my limbs? This is no mortal visitor, rather a preternatural spirit, whose hands I can feel pounding at my breast. I hear a voice calling to me in a high uneven fluttering key, saying: "My name is 'Fear, Cowardly Fear.' Do make me welcome! I have come to live with you. While I am near, nothing can harm you; for I will prevent you from doing anything but what is absolutely necessary to your comfort. I will hinder you from doing, aye from doing. I am a fine jailor, a fine jailor; and mind your jailor, or your heart will ache. The easiest way is often the best. Remember, remember! Consult me before you do anything, think anything, or wish anything, and you will have no responsi-



bilities. Do what I tell you or do nothing. It is really best to do nothing; that is safest. Never venture anything until you consult me. Oh, understand that I am a prime adviser. You will soon not be able to live without me. I have been with your family for gen-

## THE FAMILY CLOAK

erations. I will guide and protect you. You will never do much for your own or others' happiness, welfare or enjoyment. But what does that matter; for, should you try to do something, you might fail, you know. Some one might get hurt, or come in contact with undesirable companions, or contract a severe illness. And then, how awful! If you give others the delights they long for, and, as a result, they are injured, you are responsible. There is only one chance in a million that anything would happen; but there might something happen, you know. Don't do anything you haven't done; don't do anything those who have worn your cloak and manacles have not done; but follow in their footsteps, for they had experience and know. If you act otherwise, you may be sorry. Take me in your arms and love me, for I am your true friend." The sprite now clings so close to me that I feel I am strangling, and push aside my heavy robe to get, for just one short moment, a breath of God's fresh air and freedom. With a wild scream the imp is upon me, crying: "How dare you, you fool; how dare you! You will meet your death if a



## A FANTASY OF SOULS

strange breeze touches you. Go back into your cloak, and cover well—cover well.” I gasp and moan at the hard blows dealt by the hands of “Cowardly Fear,” and again creep under the protecting cover of my prison clothes.

Dully through my heavy veil I gaze and watch, with tearful eyes, the passing and doings of other shrouded figures, looking strangely odd, as though gowned in domino and mask, as they move before me with methodical precision, like sad phantoms in a dream. A flash of clear, white light pierces the dull gray of the surrounding heavy misty atmosphere, and again into sight flashes a radiant form, clad in flowing, open robes of bright, prismatic hues. Head, arms and feet are bare and free of all restricting hands. Bright as the rosy sunrise glow, pure, sweet,



shining with holy light that comes from within, is that figure strong and fair. Another, and still another comes before me. How brave and beautiful they are, as they float by, ignorant of the fate

## THE FAMILY CLOAK

that awaits them here. See, they are detained in their flight by somber figures bound and chained, creatures filled with fear and dislike for these bold spirits. Closer, still closer, they press about them. They grasp the glittering garments with eager, destructive fingers, dragging them from the fair shoulders and trampling them under foot, cursing horribly the while. Observe, now behind each gray form is a figure, misshapen and ugly, who with vile unholy chattering encourages the shackled band to fresh endeavor. Now, now, the fair beings are down, crouching in the sand, their glad raiment in shreds and tatters. Eyes wild with terror, they struggle valiantly; but however brave and ambitious, their strength cannot last against the fierce, resentful blows and the smothering folds of the many dreadful enveloping cloaks and veils that beat against their upturned faces like an army of ugly, loathsome bats. Look! Now they sink, those beautiful ones, beneath the pressure. They faint, they fall, while the gray army send up an awful shout of joy and derision, and leave this

## A FANTASY OF SOULS

second band of venturesome spirits vanquished on the desert sands.

No, the weird company have not gone. They are stopping now and waiting. They call, in voices hoarse and hard, "Come, sister, come; you are one of us, you wear our uniform; you must join our band; you must do your part to keep the world from the foolish influence of such as these that we have done to death." I answer the call and follow the procession. I am tramping now with them, and keeping step to the unharmonious sounds of many bondage chains. Clank, clank, clank, they say as they strain and pull upon our ankles. I look back at those lovely, prostrate forms, torn and bleeding; and while I gaze each raises to mine a sweet, reproachful face, and slender white fingers point to the sky above. Yes, truly, a star is there; a great, golden steady glowing star, their divine and guiding light.

Ah! I am tired; so weary, weary! Something is very wrong with me. I have followed the advice of my protecting genius; I have obeyed the commands of my ancestors. I have seen with

## THE FAMILY CLOAK

their eyes, thought their thoughts, copied their actions, delighted in following their example—and yet? Life seems a failure; I am utterly miserable, sick and lonely. Happiness fled from me when I clasped hands with past ages, and clouds of disappointment envelop me. I feel myself lagging behind the grim company. I stumble, fall and lie upon my face, while a frightful ache grinds and throbs in my throat and in the depths of my heart.

A gentle touch upon my shrouded form disturbs me. I feel a faint clutch at my enveloping cloak, and, opening my eyes, see before me the sweet, childish face so dear to me, whose eyes have looked so often deeply, trustingly into mine. What is she doing, this baby girl? I feel her fluttering breath, faint and delicate as the perfume of her favorite flower, fan my cheek. I feel a faint sensation of little fingers pulling and tugging at my clumsy veil; and at last, with a glad cry of success, the enshrouding folds are dragged from off my face and the fastenings of my musty garment snap beneath the persevering baby hands. The heavy weight falls from my

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breast and discloses underneath, to my astonished eyes, the soft, filmy, glistening garments, crushed and torn, the garments that I had quite forgotten I had ever worn! I feel a joyous bounding heartbeat, a delicious gladness. The sky looks a heavenly blue; love makes my heart tender for all mankind. Angel voices sound sweetly in my ears, calling: "Come into your *true* inheritance! Love, hope, work, rejoice! Be yourself; God's own child, to live and do and seek all things." I reach forth my hands in ecstasy, when, just in time to prevent my complete dismantlement, my cursed familiar Cowardly Fear creeps out from his snug hiding-place in much alarm, shouting excitedly in my ear, "Quick, quick, cover yourself! Cover yourself, I say! Will you discard these protecting, comfortable garments, exposing yourself to every strange influence that is waiting to convince you of different thoughts, different habits, different ways, and a possible death similar to those beings we have left behind us on the sand? I say you are mad. Cover, cover! If you love that radiant child with a possessive love, do not leave her

## THE FAMILY CLOAK

unprotected to her own devices. She has no right to a life different from others of her ancestral line. Bind her to your side; wrap her in a corner of your mantle until you have her fast and sure. Teach her to see the world through the eyes of the past only. Make her live her life from your viewpoint. Veil all other vistas; they are strange to you, and you know not whither they lead. Implant my teachings in her heart; make her know Fear. Let me join you in your work. I, 'Fear,' will take her in hand and protect her from all harm, all joy, all sorrow—all, all, whether good or evil. We will straightway cast upon her the 'Family Cloak,' enveloping veil, manacles, chain, ball, all that you wear. She will then be safe, quite safe. We will protect her from herself, from her personality, originality, inclinations, ambitions. We will cover them well, guard them carefully, and in time kill them; for they are all bad things, new and untried. If she should show a little natural talent we will discourage it—crush it in her heart; if she wishes to go her own way we will chain her fast. That is easily done; all I need to do is to place my finger

## A FANTASY OF SOULS

on it, and it will wither away. We will make her a child after our own pattern. It is best for her; it has been tried. We will be doing a kindness."

How thankful I ought to be to have such a cautious counselor! What had I nearly done? I had almost allowed this young innocent child to disrobe me of my precious inheritance, and to make me see fair mirages over the desert with unveiled eyes.

I tear my beloved garments from the caressing hands and dive beneath the protecting folds once more, while I firmly grasp little tender wrists with fingers strong and firm. The child at my rough touch gives an astonished, terrified gasp. The beautiful, innocent eyes look into mine in wild surprise; and then, with a frightened scream of alarm, she falls backward from my hands. A blinding flash of light pierces me to my very heart; ruddy, gleaming flames dart forth in all directions, and a voice from above calls out, in

clarion tones: "Leave her to herself; she has a right to live. She *will* live for herself and by herself, in the present and



### THE FAMILY CLOAK

in the future, with God's help and guidance, not away in the dim shadows of the past. Prevent her at your peril! "

I spring forward as the little childish form is disappearing. I grasp, in frantic haste and reckless of consequence, at one of her white limbs, which I hold fast in an iron clutch. At once I am surrounded by hundreds of gibbering, chattering imps, and with their help I drag the tiny figure to me and force her down upon the sand. But in what condition does she lie at my feet! The white flesh battered and bruised; the bright hair blood-stained and torn; her baby face turned to mine, but not with smiles and joyous glances. No recognition shines from those accusing innocent eyes; they are sad, dead, staring eyes, pitiful to look at. Quickly the imps and I adjust the manacles upon the childish wrists and the chain about her slender ankle. The veil now hides her lovely face from view, and the Family Cloak is folded tightly about the stiffening limbs. She does not move, she does not cry or struggle; she is still, strangely still. Mine at last, at last! The shining ones are conquered and ancestral voices



## A FANTASY OF SOULS

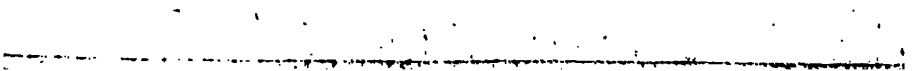
can be heard from the charnel house rejoicing in the victory.

Again I hear the warning, "At your peril; at your peril!" and I begin to shake and tremble. I stand alone with Fear, who, from a slender sprite, has taken on a giant's size and strength. Grabbing me from off my feet, he runs and springs. He bounds and stumbles in a maddening, frightened flight; crying aloud for help and protection from some unknown power above and beyond his narrow realm of cowardice and self interest. At last he falls exhausted to the ground, dragging me with him, tight in his horrid arms. My senses leave me, and I sink unto death. Oh! woe is me, woe is me! May God have mercy on my soul! One thought is mine—the child, the child! It pounds my brain and burns into my soul. Too late I realize my frightful mistake; too late I realize my own pitiful, slavish condition; too late I understand so many things that were incomprehensible before.

With "Cowardly Fear" ever by my side, and his imps of darkness peering and sneering at me from every corner, I spend my hours and days in

## THE FAMILY CLOAK

misery; and everywhere I look I see the pictured face of a little child, that beautiful child who should be more to me than life. She gazes at me with her pure, true, wide-open eyes, in the depths of which shines a smile, a smile still bearing holy light from the angel world. But now the picture changes; the face is blue and bruised, the hair bloodstained and torn; the baby hands are raised in supplication, and all the goblins call in satanic delight, "Too late, too late!"



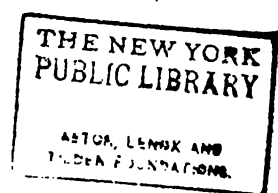


**SOUL TO SOUL**





**"Why, Soul of a Woman, so restless and disturbed?" (page 59)**



## SOUL TO SOUL

**“W**HY, Soul of a Woman, so restless and disturbed? I would know the reason of your weary wanderings.”

“O, Soul of a Man! my answer will, I fear, be beyond your comprehension.”

“Have confidence, sweet Woman’s Soul; tell me your sorrows. I will do my utmost to understand.”

“Dear Spirit, if you could truly realize the reason of my distress, I should no longer be the uneasy soul that disturbs your peace. Know that, feeling most intensely my incompleteness, I am constantly reaching out, longing, wandering, searching unsuccessfully, alone and sorrowful for that which will add more light and growth, power and joy to my existence. Oh! this is what you have not known, and I fear it is difficult for you to conceive my loneliness, my craving for unattained perfection.”



## A FANTASY OF SOULS

"You are not the only grieving soul, my sister. When I study my own condition I must acknowledge that I, too, am restless and filled with desire for that which I have not. Great, masterful and wonderful as I am, I am aware completion has been denied me, and unfulfilled ambitions for larger and grander achievements cause me agony and distress beyond expression."

"Brother, if you will but consent to bestow upon me your highest confidence, receive me into your inner life—soul to soul—my intuition tells me I can aid you to develop into such perfection that you will revolutionize the lives of all spirits crossing your pathway; and in bringing this condition to pass I feel I shall find for myself that for which I have long searched, prayed ardently for and despaired of in sadness and desolation, recognition as a perfect soul. Your most precious aspiration I can realize for you, and, in exchange you can give to my woman's soul the opportunity to develop all that is lurking there; that is to say, attain my highest ideal."

"What can you teach me, dear Mother Soul, that I do not already know? What can you bring

## SOUL TO SOUL

into my life that I have not felt? What can you say to me that my own great knowledge has not told me?"

"O, Father Soul! you are indeed brave and strong. You and your brothers have been rulers over all the world since life began. Yours is a master mind, and you have developed a power to do and dare all things. Love you have known, and the joys of possession have been yours. Even so, there is something more, and of as great import, that in your haste for mastery you have neglected to cultivate."

"My Friend, I believe you have spoken the truth. I acknowledge I have made unreasonable haste to rule, and in my mad, ambitious struggle for power have overlooked much for my happiness and growth. Scores of women's souls have come in contact with my own. I have sensed their beauty, their dependence, and have enjoyed their presence and companionship; but never before have I looked below the surface of their lovely, alluring exteriors. I now,



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with a broader vision, view many matters new and never before dreamed of by me. Teach me, dear Mother Soul, and I will listen to your counsel."

"My Brother, you must prepare yourself for the revelation that is coming to you; and I, who so many years have sorrowed and searched in vain for the full development that alone brings happiness and perfection, must receive from you, in exchange for my disclosure, the unveiling of your most sacred aspirations and the revealing of every unworthy thought and deed. Our souls must be laid bare, one to the other, before we can attain our greatest desire. Majestic Soul of a Man, I am a suppliant before you, and humbly beg that you will free us both from our limitations. You should be the first to receive. Gaze deep into my naked, waiting soul, which has longed and prayed for this awakening for countless days."

"O Wonderful Soul of a Woman! What marvels have you disclosed to me! A fair motherhood is laid open before me, holy, sacred, with all the qualities and beauties that maternity

## SOUL TO SOUL

brings; surrounded by love, not only personal love, but large human love, seeking to mother all the world. And great is my astonishment to discover, in addition to these feminine characteristics, strength, courage and the ability to rule. Every attribute that has made me great and powerful I find within, ready an opportunity for expression. I did not dream your woman's soul contained these qualities. I have always, to the present time, considered them as dwelling alone in masculine spirits; and I am sore ashamed that I have claimed their sole glory for myself and my brothers. Joy is, indeed, mine that I now understand aright!

"Come near to me, my sister; we will henceforth travel together, soul to soul, until we both attain the full perfection of life we so much desire."

"O, Marvelous Soul of a Man, what wonders do I see as I look into the depths of your grand spirit! Great and masterful you are—strong, courageous, brave; ruler of all the world since life began. All these traits of fatherhood glow with new radiance from your extraordinary self,

## A FANTASY OF SOULS

and in addition are quite as many striking qualities of a softer character, which I view as in a mirror reflecting from my own feminine soul. Closely surrounding your masculine characteristics I discover the same beautiful maternal traits that have been described as 'feminine'; the same mother tenderness is in *your* soul as in my own; the same sweetness, gentleness and love, not only personal love, but love for *all* the world.

"Your dearest wish is to become perfect—complete—which cannot come to pass until the same motherhood is developed within you, equally with your masculine qualities. Be not ashamed to give it room to grow, for it is your salvation."

"My most holy desire cannot be realized until the masculine attributes within me develop side by side with my maternal qualities. Help me to gain what you already enjoy; for only with this realization to us both will come completion, with the knowledge and manifestation that *soul is sexless*, perfect in every respect."

"You, the great Father Soul, will then comprehend me truly as I am, and gather me close

## SOUL TO SOUL

within your life, your second self, so to speak, and yet different."

"At last I am at peace! I, the great Father Soul, have come into my own; and you, the marvelous Mother Soul, can now attain perfection. Together our highest ideals realized, our most cherished desires satisfied, equal, complete and entire, father and mother, masculine and feminine; two in one in power and majesty, in strength, beauty, tenderness and love, we will travel henceforth, through eternity, united in all things, our hearts beating in unison, our lives forever entwined one with the other."







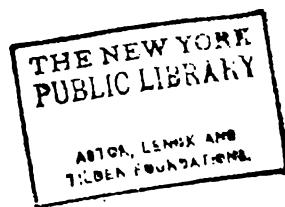
**WHEN JOY SPEAKS**



[REDACTED]



**"To love, to do, to serve" (page 78)**



### WHEN JOY SPEAKS

**J**OY bent her lovely head, and a gentle smile curved her questioning lips, as she stretched forth a strong, white hand to the "Wanderer," whom she discovered faint and weary by the wayside.

"Why do you weep, Traveler? What means these bitter tears, this sad and haggard countenance, these halting, listless footsteps, when happiness is before you, behind you, on every side? Come, lift up your drooping head and gaze at all the wondrous beauty by which you are surrounded. Give me your hand; look into my eyes and tell me your tale of sorrow; for dread woe, I can plainly see, has been your close companion these many days."

Glancing timidly at the radiant, confident figure, the "Wanderer" answered thus: "Bright, Ministering Spirit, tell me how I can smile and keep a tender heart within my breast,

## A FANTASY OF SOULS

when all the world is suffering from trials and tribulations. No, it is impossible for me to feel happy and content. Rather, I must keep my glances fastened to the ground for fear some new terror I might encounter should I choose to look abroad. At my birth 'Sorrow' was midwife; through my childish years 'Care' led me through many fearsome places. In my youth 'Fear' became my comrade, robbing my cheeks of bloom, taking the bright sparkle from my eyes and the ready smile from my lips. The best years of my life have passed from me, leaving sorrow and despair as my companions. I have grown old among the shadows of heartache, illness and death, and now can see nothing else in all the world. Beautiful Spirit, so filled with vibrant vitality and life, whose very glance is a benediction, sending warmth and buoyancy even into my sad heart! You are care free, never having known the pain of suffering. Give me your strong hand, that you may feel my heart as it lies like dull lead within my bosom. You will then not talk to me of happiness when you realize the heavy load I carry."

## WHEN JOY SPEAKS

“Wanderer, here is my hand; place it upon your heart, that we both may understand each other better. See, I lay my fingers lightly on your side, and now your rapid and uneven heart-beats throb and pound beneath their touch like some fine musical instrument out of tune. Poor heart, cease your unruly pace, gently, rhythmically, and in fit order; you should play your part in the World's Great Symphony instead of giving forth discordant sounds to craze the brain and drive the mind into forbidden places.



“Listen to me, Traveler; you, who have lived for so long in the twilight, do as I direct, and a new heaven and a new earth shall be revealed to you. Without doubt you suffer, suffer intense agonies. And why should you not? You keep your thoughts ever upon what sadness has visited you. These sick thoughts wander back and forth, in and out, deep down in the depths of your being, among sad graves of buried ambitions, hopes and loves. Far away, alone and soli-

## A FANTASY OF SOULS

tary in your narrow cell, your spirit has become a very hermit, hidden from all men. This should not be. You are breaking Nature's laws when you concentrate your interest within the narrow boundaries of your own personality, and turn away from the life surrounding you in myriad shapes on every side, of which you form so small a part. Come with me, poor soul, I beg; give me your trust and follow me.

"Lift up your eyes, fearful Wanderer. I command you, in all love, to take your thoughts from out that charnel-house within and disturb no more the quiet forms of the departed who, to your brooding, quickened imagination, have taken upon themselves strange shapes, huge and distorted, and out of all due proportion and likeness to their reality. Do this for me, and tell me freely what you feel and see."

Soft and warm upon the Traveler's cold heart lay the firm, white hand of "Joy." Slowly the heat from that magic palm made progress into the deepest recess within, bringing sensations of relief, comfort and rest unspeakable.

## WHEN JOY SPEAKS

“What! Oh, what has happened to me?” cried the sufferer. “I do not comprehend; I have never, in many years, felt like this. I am warm and strangely satisfied. My veins are burning and bursting with hot blood, which I feel is racing through them at lightning speed. My heart, but now so heavy, is bounding to and fro, to and fro, as lightly as a bit of thistledown to a joyful refrain, which keeps pealing through my brain as though played on celestial harps, and sung by a choir of angel voices. In truth, a miracle has come to pass. Joy, Joy, I thank thee for thy marvelous healing touch, undeserving creature that I am.”

“What do you see, Wanderer?”

“Spirit, I see no more the past in sadness, for at last the burden of ancient years has fallen from me, and I kneel in adoration, not only to the glorious present that is disclosed to me, but to the brighter future floating in the hazy, rosy distance. All the beauties and wonders of earth, sky and sea are now laid bare before me, to which I have been so wilfully and ignorantly blind. From the heavens, high and blue, the warm,



## A FANTASY OF SOULS

golden glory of his majesty, the sun, sheds magnetic beams through my entire being. The grandeur of the everlasting hills is mine. The music of the wind, the swaying branches of the trees, the songbirds flying nigh about; the little fluttering insects and small creeping things are calling to me to rejoice, joining in one grand song that echoes and reaches everywhere."

"Wanderer, they sing ever of Joy, Joy, Joy! Joy of life! Wonderful, beautiful life, sacred and holy; ours without asking, and for eternity! To use wisely in praise and thanksgiving, not to waste in idle repining and discontent, as you have done. All that the world holds of everlasting worth is yours, simply for the taking; gather the treasures that are for you, Traveler; do not pass them by. You seek love: you will find it in measures running over, in the heart of every man, woman and child, if you will but truly open your heart to them and make their living presence one with your own. You ask for work; you will find more than you can accomplish ready to your hand; for while there lives one human being upon earth, there also remains a duty for you to

## WHEN JOY SPEAKS

perform; hearts to heal, souls to save, happiness to bestow. 'Seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you.' This is life, 'To Love; to Do; to Serve.'"

"Spirit, hold fast my hand; lead me into the highway, that I may sing for very gladness, for I would proclaim aloud to all people the miracle that has come to me. I look above me to the far heavens, and the sky is no longer overcast with clouds of gray, but is as blue as your glorious eyes, the beauty of which they seem to reflect and shed upon all the earth. I look upon the ground, and there every little blade of grass holds forth slender, tender arms of green in exaltation and praise. I kneel upon dear, brown Mother Earth, and lay my face close upon her warm and generous breast, in a perfect ecstasy of rapture and thankfulness, for the wonders that are mine. Deep within her bosom I can hear strange sounds of many voices, singing, ever singing 'Joy of Life!' I crush my smiling face deep among the fragrant greens that grow so close, and close my eyes in perfect peace and contentment. Joy is in the air. It comes to my ears from every

## A FANTASY OF SOULS

growing thing, above, below; on every side the chorus grows in volume and sweetness. I feel that I must run, must dance; must, in some physical way, demonstrate my happiness. My limbs are supple and lithe once more; my heart is galloping in my breast for gladness. I tremble with eagerness to express my feelings of utter delight in all this beautiful, glorious world contains. The little brook, bounding so gayly on its way, calls me to drink of its pure Life; and as I bend to catch the sparkling, refreshing water, I see, in its bright surface, a being strange and yet familiar to my mind. This being stands close held in your embrace, and a light shines from its face that speaks of joy beyond expression. Oh, my friend! tell me the meaning of all these wondrous things."

"Wanderer, hear! Lend your astonished ear to what I have to tell. The miracle is at last complete. Behold your *true* and *perfect* self. Instead of the feeble, tottering, unhappy creature I but now discovered, stands a stately soul, beautiful, powerful, purposeful. Light shines from that countenance, telling of life, joy, service.

## WHEN JOY SPEAKS

Trembling, useless hands are steady, strong and helpful. From the eyes shine love and understanding, and the lips smile a welcome to all men.

“Look, Traveler, in the distance! They are coming, your companions, young and old, strong and weak, wise and dull, from all places, in all conditions of mind and body. A vast army, a marvelous host! Nearer, still nearer, they come to join us on our journey. Look, Wanderer, at the faces, how they all shine with a brightness and purpose, such as your own now wears; for they, like you, have found me, after weary wandering, among shadows, after shedding bitter tears and suffering many woes. Let us go forth and welcome these, our brothers and sisters, and rejoice with them, each for the other.”

“Yes, Radiant Spirit, we will, indeed, welcome them, and together we will unfurl our banner to the warm sunshine and the free air of heaven. We will gather under its streamers a bright army of pilgrims, to rejoice with us while we travel onward with understanding hearts, with helping hands, with happy souls, rescued and redeemed



## A FANTASY OF SOULS

forever from the shadows. Following your fair presence, we will lead our band into the full glory of the light, with joy inexpressible, our watchword ever 'To Love, to Do, to Serve.' Alleluia."











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